



SHERRI YBARRA
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Ms. Renae Bafus
Troy Jr-Sr High School
101 Trojan Dr.
Troy, ID 83871

Ms. Bafus,

I would first like to thank you for your letter, and commend you on taking the time to write me with your questions and concerns. These are important issues, so know that your voice has been heard and you are supported.

I am listening to those educators in the field and I will not do this job in a vacuum. One of my goals during my time in office as Superintendent of Public Instruction is to advocate for attracting and retaining our best and brightest educators. During the first legislative session of my term, you witnessed my advocacy towards this direction. For example, being involved in the career ladder discussion was a step in the right direction for attracting and retaining high quality teachers, but we also need strategies in place that help to ensure that the message we send to our future teachers is: We offer excellent working conditions along with a supportive environment. "Join Idaho's vibrant team of professionals!" We are not finished with this work, and as research indicates, it takes a combination of efforts at the local level and at the state level to achieve this.

You ask about equalizing school funding so that every student has the same general and uniform opportunities. In looking at equity in funding through the Idaho Legislature, I do know that legislators want to do the right thing for our students while meeting their constitutional obligation to provide funding equity in education. With that being said, I believe the more important question concerning the Idaho Legislature is continuing to move towards adequacy in funding. There are many stakeholders involved in this conversation who are interested in the adequacy of funding for public schools, so a funding formula committee was formed by the Governor, and is currently discussing how the education funding formula may be revised to best support our students. The results from this committee will support the discussions around educational funding, in the upcoming legislative session.

Equity and adequacy in education funding needs to be discussed, not only regarding the appropriations by the Idaho Legislature, but also with local control and decisions made through each local school board. Please know that I will turn over every rock and shake every tree when it comes to finding more resources and dollars for education in Idaho. Within this discussion, we must remember that this conversation is both a vertical one and a horizontal one. For example, funding should be looked at in three different areas: 1) Equity in funding education from all applicable revenue streams, 2) Equity and adequacy through the appropriation by the Idaho Legislature, 3) Equity in educational funding through local control, by local school districts.

Along this same topic, we at the State Department of Education recognize that districts need more flexibility in the way dollars are spent. Under my administration, we will be moving away from line item mandates and appropriations which have numerous strings attached, which in turn, should relieve the pressure on discretionary funding. This will



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allow us to work towards the Governor's Task Force recommendation of restoring funding to the 2009 levels. This flexibility will also allow local leaders to make decisions based on local needs. Also, we recognize that over 70% of Idaho's schools are rural, and our job is to find ways to support these students to be successful. That is why our Rural Education Resource Centers that we are proposing this year is also a step in the right direction.

Finally, as an educator, know that you are supported and I have walked in your shoes. What you can count on is my voice in advocating for education in Idaho, and listening to the concerns of educators throughout my term as Superintendent. I have said time and time again, I am not a politician, but a lifelong educator who understands the hard work that you do. It's letters like yours that will help to change the culture of education in Idaho, while we raise the profession, and help others to recognize that we are in the business of "human elevation."

Again, thank you for your letter. And, thank you for your service to Idaho's children!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherri Ybarra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sherri" and last name "Ybarra" clearly distinguishable.

Sherri Ybarra
Superintendent of Public Instruction